

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 232305

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TAGS: MPOL, EAIR, BE, GW, IT, NL, UK

SUBJECT: COMPASS COPE

1. IN LATE 1975, THE US AIR FORCE COMPLETED INITIAL FEASIBILITY TESTING AND IS NOW PREPARING TO ENTER ENGINEERING DEVELOPMENT PHASE OF A HIGH ALTITUDE, LONG ENDURANCE, MULTI-PURPOSE, REMOTELY PILOTED VEHICLE (RPV) SYSTEM. (AN RPV IS A PILOTLESS AIRCRAFT REMOTELY CONTROLLED BY AN EXTERNAL OPERATOR FROM A CONTROL STATION ON THE GROUND OR IN ANOTHER AIRCRAFT). THIS SYSTEM, DESIGNATED COMPASS COPE, CONSISTS OF THE AIRCRAFT, A GROUND-BASED COMMAND AND CONTROL CENTER WHERE THE OPERATOR AND AN ENGINEER WILL BE HOUSED, A COMMUNICATIONS SUPPORT STATION, AND A MICROWAVE LANDING SYSTEM. THE AIRCRAFT WOULD BE LAUNCHED FROM AND UNCLASSIFIED

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PAGE 02 STATE 232305

RECOVERED AT MILITARY AIRFIELDS AND USE CONVENTIONAL

LANDING GEAR. IT WOULD BE CAPABLE OF REMAINING AT ALTITUDES ABOVE 55,000 FEET FOR PERIODS IN EXCESS OF 24 HOURS AND OF PERFORMING A VARIETY OF RECONNAISSANCE, SURVEILLANCE AND COMMUNICATIONS RELAY TASKS. THE AIRCRAFT WOULD PERFORM THESE TASKS IN A STANDOFF MODE, SINCE IT WILL NOT BE DESIGNED TO PENETRATE HOSTILE AIRSPACE. TO ENSURE RELIABILITY AND SAFETY, COMPASS COPE WILL BE PROVIDED WITH REDUNDANCY IN ALL CRITICAL GROUND AND AIRBORNE SYSTEMS, INCLUDING COMMUNICATIONS, FLIGHT CONTROL,

ELECTRICAL POWER AND AUTOMATIC LANDING.

2. ONE OF THE QUESTIONS THAT NEEDS TO BE ADDRESSED BEFORE THE AIR FORCE PROCEEDS WITH A LARGE SCALE ENGINEERING EFFORT IS WHETHER AN RPV CAN BE ROUTINELY OPERATED IN FOREIGN AIRSPACE. AIR FORCE HAS ALREADY DISCUSSED OPERATION OF RPV IN US AIRSPACE WITH FAA, WHOSE POSITION ON RPVS IS AS FOLLOWS:

A. INITIAL TESTS HAVING DEMONSTRATED THE CONTROLABILITY AND RELIABILITY OF RPVS, THEY CAN BE OPERATED IN POSITIVE CONTROL AREAS UNDER NORMAL INSTRUMENT FLIGHT (IFR) PROCEDURES.

B. OUTSIDE OF POSITIVE CONTROL AREAS, WARNING AREAS, OR RESTRICTED AREAS, RPVS MUST BE ABLE TO "SEE AND AVOID" OTHER AIRCRAFT WHEN WEATHER CONDITIONS PERMIT, REGARDLESS OF THE TYPE OF FLIGHT PLAN. IF COMPASS COPE AIRCRAFT, WHICH WILL BE FITTED WITH ONBOARD TV SYSTEM TO PROVIDE IT "SEE AND AVOID" CAPABILITY, DEMONSTRATE ADEQUATE CAPABILITY IN THIS RESPECT, THEY WILL BE PERMITTED TO OPERATE UNDER ESSENTIALLY THE SAME RULES AS OTHER AIRCRAFT.

C. IF COMPASS COPE AIRCRAFT CANNOT BE GIVEN ADEQUATE "SEE AND AVOID" CAPABILITY, THEY MUST BE ACCOMPANIED BY A CHASE PLANE WITH DIRECT COMMUNICATION WITH THE CONTROLLING SOURCE FACILITIES.

D. IF AN ALTERNATIVE MEANS OF OBSERVING RPV FLIGHT AND
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PAGE 03 STATE 232305

COMMUNICATIONS WITH THE CONTROLLING SOURCE FACILITIES IS AVAILABLE AND CAN PROVIDE LEVEL OF SAFETY EQUAL TO CHASE PLANE, FAA REGION MAY, AT ITS DISCRETION, APPROVE IT. SUCH ALTERNATIVE MEANS COULD INCLUDE VISUAL OBSERVATION FROM ONE OR MORE GROUND SITES, RPV FLIGHT MONITORING BY PATROL AIRCRAFT, PRIMARY RADAR OBSERVATION, OR USE OF CLIMB/DESCENT CORRIDORS.

3. DISCUSSIONS WITH FRG MOD PERSONNEL INDICATE THERE ARE NO INSURMOUNTABLE PROBLEMS IN OPERATING COMPASS COPE WITHIN FRG AIRSPACE. THE UK, ITALY, BELGIUM AND THE NETHERLANDS ARE CONSIDERED ADDITIONAL COUNTRIES FROM WHICH COMPASS COPE WOULD POTENTIALLY OPERATE. DRAWING ON ABOVE, POSTS ARE THEREFORE REQUESTED TO ASCERTAIN WHETHER HOST COUNTRY WOULD PERMIT ROUTINE PEACETIME OPERATION OF COMPASS COPE SYSTEM IN ITS AIRSPACE. IN MAKING INQUIRY WE ARE NOT SEEKING COMMITMENT TO PERMIT SPECIFIC MISSION OPERATIONS IN FUTURE, BUT ATTEMPTING EARLY ON TO DETERMINE WHETHER

COMPASS COPE OPERATIONS WOULD BE PERMISSIBLE UNDER THE AIR TRAFFIC REGULATIONS OF HOST COUNTRIES AND WHAT AIR TRAFFIC RESTRICTIONS, IF ANY, THEY WOULD APPLY TO SUCH OPERATIONS. IF FURTHER TECHNICAL DATA ON COMPASS COPE REQUIRED, HEADQUARTERS, USAFE/DCF, RAMSTEIN AIR BASE, FRG, WOULD BE HAPPY TO PROVIDE IT. SINCE DEVELOPMENT DECISION ON COMPASS COPE EXPECTED TO BE MADE IN EARLY 1977, WE WOULD APPRECIATE EMBASSY RESPONSES BY OCT 15. ROBINSON

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